

TEAM OYSTERCATCHER NEWSLETTER No. 12. March, 2025



Our Team Oystercatcher Newsletter No. 12 contains all the recent news on our volunteers' surveys in our regional areas over the past 6 months, a update on recent re-sightings of banded/flagged Oystercatchers, and progress on current projects undertaken by recipients of SA Shorebirds Foundations grants.

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1. REGIONAL NEWS

1.a. South East SA . Biennial beach nesting shorebird counts are undertaken in November along the SE coast from the Granites (lower Coorong Ocean Beach) to the SA/ Victorian border, a distance of 207 km by Friends of Shorebirds SE (J. Campbell, 2025). The most recent survey in November, 2024, reported a significant drop in Pied Oystercatcher numbers, from 103 in 2022 to 43 (Fig. 1). However, over the 8 surveys, the trend in counts have not altered significantly ($R^2 = 0.0092$). It should be noted that in earlier years, counts were not taken at several sites because there was an emphasis only on counting Hooded Plovers. In this past year, Sooty Oystercatcher counts continued to rise, with numbers being the highest for all survey years (Fig. 1). The upward trend was significant ($R^2 = 0.7641$).

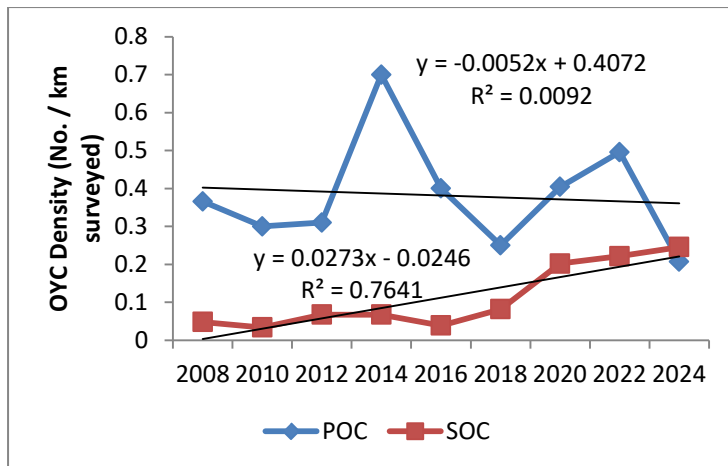


Fig. 1: Densities of Oystercatchers (No. / km surveyed) in the SE SA observed by FoSSE volunteers, 2008 – 2024.

In the latest survey, juvenile Oystercatchers were reported at Nora Creina to Southend (POC) and Robe Bay and Nora Creina (SOC) indicating breeding in these areas in 2024. In February, 2025, Shorebird volunteer Barry Simes visited Nora Creina, reporting a family of Sooty Oystercatchers (2 adults and a juvenile) (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: A family of Sooty Oystercatchers (juvenile in the centre) at Nora Creina, SE SA. February, 2025. Photo: B. Simes. Note, the parent on the left has a flag T3, see p. 19, Banding News.

1.b. Coorong Lagoon and Ocean Beach. Three separate surveys on both resident and migratory shorebirds were carried out over the past six months in this region.

Firstly, in January, 2025, Birdlife Australia's Adelaide-based staff and statewide volunteers carried out the annual summer shore and boat based survey of the Coorong Lagoon (Southern and Northern Lagoons and the Murray Estuary). Lakes and Coorong commercial fishers greatly assisted in the boat based surveys in the Northern Lagoon and the Murray Estuary. The long-term summer counts of POCs in the Coorong Lagoon show wide variations, but overall, the population numbers show no significant trend (Fig. 3). The provisional 2025 count (80) was relatively low.

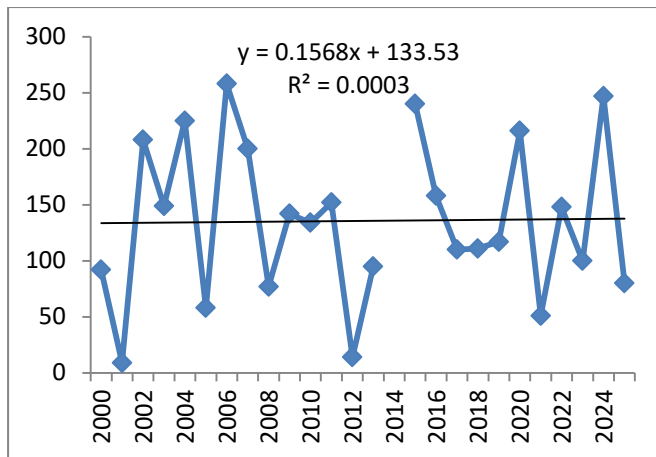


Fig. 3: POC summer counts and trend line in the Coorong Lagoon, 2000 – 2025, note: no data for 2014.

The counts of SOC in the lagoon are generally much lower than those for POCs, with the former, predominantly observed in the Murray Estuary. In 2025, no SOC were noted throughout the lagoon.

Summer surveys of shorebirds have been undertaken intermittently on the Coorong Ocean Beach, between Tea-Tree Crossing and the Murray Mouth, a distance of more than 100 km. Counts are available for two periods – a) 2000 – 2008; and b) 2021 – 2025. In February, 2025, the survey was again undertaken by BirdLife Australia in conjunction with the Coorong National Park Rangers. The mean summer counts for the two periods show significant changes for both OYC species. For POCs, counts dropped by more than 50%, and for SOC, their counts increased by more than 115% (Table 1).

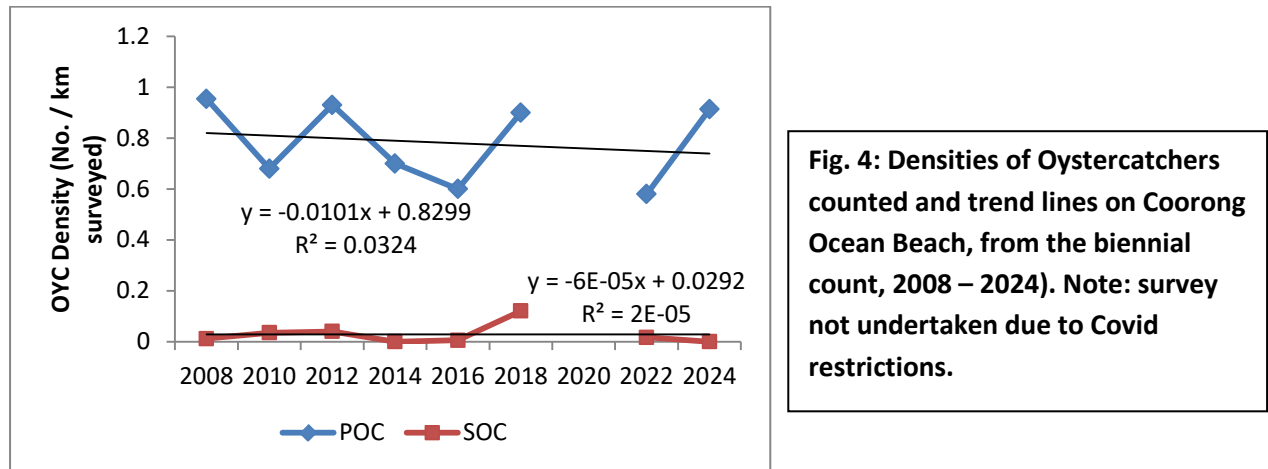
Table 1: Mean Summer counts of POCs and SOC on Coorong Ocean Beach for a) 2000 – 2009 and b) 2020 – 2025.

Period	POC Mean (St. Dev)	SOC Mean (St. Dev)
2000 – 2009	425.9 (68.7)	2.2 (3.9)
2020 - 2025	187.8 (43.5)	25.8 (19.8)

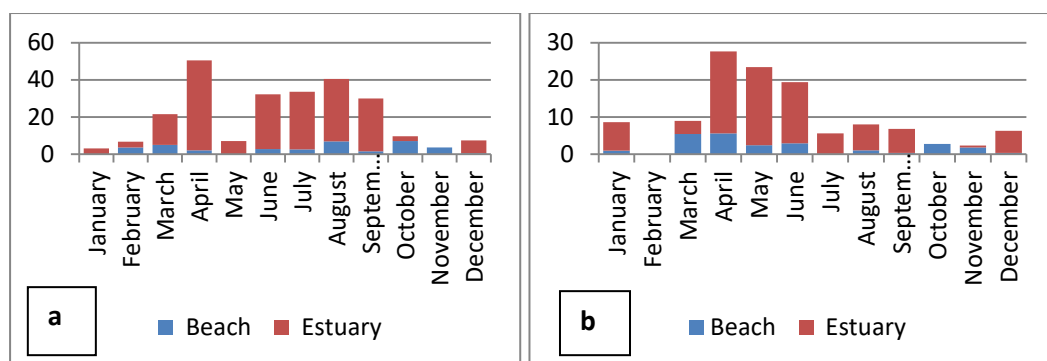
In this latest 2025 summer survey, at least 8 family pairs of adult POCs still had recently fledged juvenile birds accompanying them, again indicating near-by breeding.

Finally, between 2008 and 2024, the biennial beach-nesting shorebird surveys are carried out every 2 years by Birdlife Australia Volunteers on the Coorong Ocean Beach. The distance surveyed (173 km) is the same as for the summer surveys. November is the targeted month when many of the shorebird species are breeding. Over this period, the mean POC counts are 133.1 (st.dev. 24.7) and show a slight downward, but no significant trend over this period ($R^2 = 0.0324$) (Fig. 4). Very low numbers of SOC have been observed during all the years (5.0, st.dev. 6.5), and in contrast to the summer surveys, there has been no recent increase in counts. It is likely that, as SOC don't breed along this ocean beach, the

low November counts probably reflect the observations that most of the birds have moved to their breeding areas, such as offshore islands (see. P.6, Fig. 8, SW Fleurieu).



1.c. South Eastern Fleurieu. This region covers the coast between the Murray Estuary and Middleton Point. During 2024, densities of both POCs and SOC were relatively low on the Ocean Beaches, between Middleton Point and the Beacon 19 walkway (POC: 2.95+/-0.44; SOC: 1.95+/-0.39), compared with densities at the Murray Mouth and within the Estuary (POC: 17.5+/-1.1; SOC: 8.01+/-0.78). On the Ocean Beaches, there was no appreciable seasonality for either species; however, at the Murray Mouth sites, flocking by POCs occurred between March and September, and for SOC, between April and June (Figs. 5 a & b). For SOC the timing of flocking coincided with the birds observed along the SW Fleurieu coast and Islands (see Fig. 10, p. 7).



Figs. 5 a & b. Monthly Densities (mean nos / site) of a) Pied Oystercatchers and b) Sooty Oystercatchers on SE Fleurieu Beaches and the Murray Estuary during 2024.

During late November, 2024 and February, 2025, on the eastern edge of the Murray Mouth, a breeding pair of POCs produced a dependent offspring (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: Family of Pied Oystercatchers (juvenile in the centre) at the Murray Mouth. February, 2025. Photo: R. Shirlaw.

1.d. South western Fleurieu The monthly counts of Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers since July, 2017 have been reviewed for the SW Fleurieu coast, between Bashams Beach in the east to Cape Jervis in the west, and taking in the offshore islands (Pullen, Granite, Seal, Wright and West Islands). Counts are based on Birddata records (Birdlife Australia Explore), observations by volunteer, Roslyn Shirlaw, Birdlife Australia's Kerri Bartley and those carrying out surveys on the Big Duck Ocean Tours. Monthly counts from all positive surveys between July, 2017 and February, 2025 were amalgamated into 4 regions (1) Bashams/Port Elliot/Knight's Beach; 2) Encounter Bay/Victor Harbor; 3) Offshore Islands and 4) Waitpinga to Cape Jervis. Average densities (Numbers / month / region) are seen for the two species in Fig. 7.

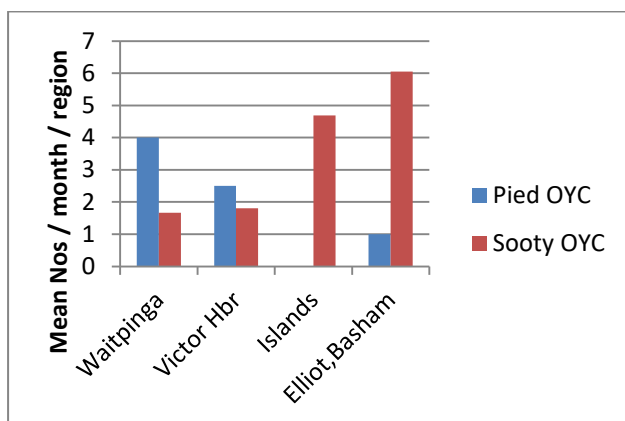


Fig. 7: Mean densities of Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers in 4 regions of the SW Fleurieu Coast (July 2017 – Feb, 2025).



Fig. 8: Adult SOC and accompanying chick (lower right) amongst Granite Boulders on Wright Island, SW Fleurieu. Photo: D. Weinert, December, 2024

Fig. 9: Adult Female Sooty Oystercatcher foraging on granite boulder, Wright Island, SW Fleurieu Coast. Photo: M. Davis, March, 2025. Note: female Oystercatchers can be distinguished from males possessing marginally longer and finer bills.



The densities for the two species differ markedly between regions, with POCs more common to the west, and vice versa for the SOC. SOC was the only Oystercatcher species observed on offshore Islands. Breeding pairs and juvenile SOC were observed only on Granite, Wright and West islands (Figs. 8 & 9). Seasonal trends in densities of SOC in the 4 regions indicate highest densities on the Offshore Islands (only Pullen Island) and the Port Elliot/Bashams Beach regions. In Autumn (April – June) and in October for the Port Elliot /Bashams Beach) region up to 25 birds were reported flocking at individual sites (Fig. 10).

Similar seasonally high flocking numbers of SOC in April - June occurs on the Middleton and Goolwa beaches (Fig. 5b).

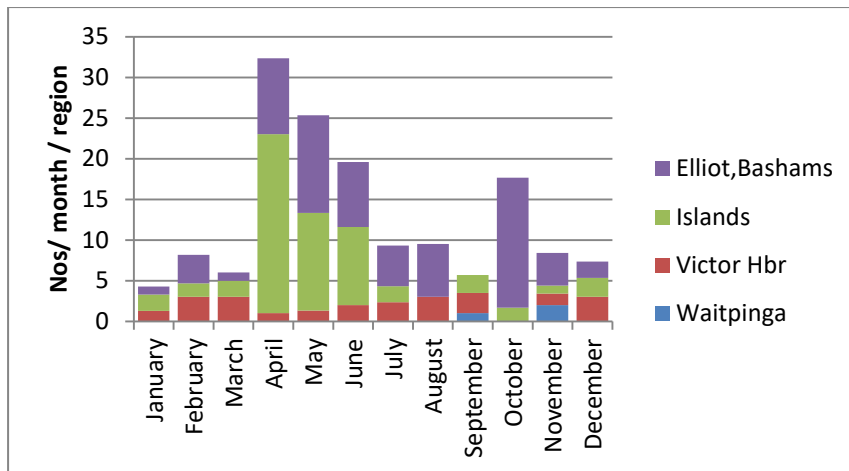


Fig. 10 : Seasonal variation in densities of Sooty Oystercatchers in the 4 regions of SW Fleurieu.

1.e. Western Fleurieu. Shorebird volunteer, Barry Simes continues to regularly monitor the Snapper Point site, with other “Hoodie” recorders reporting their SOC observations at 16 other Western Fleureu sites between Marino Rocks and Lady Bay. The downward trend in numbers of SOC’s in this part of the SA coast continues with even few sightings in recent months at all sites. (Fig. 11).

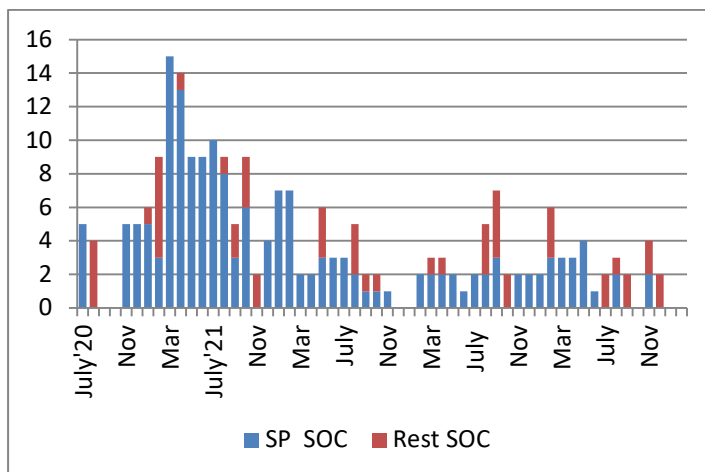


Fig. 11: Cumulative monthly counts of Sooty Oystercatchers, July, 2000 – Feb, 2025 at Snapper Point (blue) and the rest of Western Fleurieu coast (maroon).

No POCs were reported along the Western Fleurieu coast these past 6 months.

1.f. Samphire Coast.

Since 2016, Oystercatcher counts from regular monthly surveys by KJ, DP, JT have covered 10 sites on the southern Samphire coast between the LeFevre Peninsula (Semaphore, North Haven, Outer Harbor Boat Ramp) to the Port River (Mutton Cove, western Torrens Island, central Port River, the Bower Rd causeway), as well as Bird Island and St. Kilda. For this report, the Northern Samphire coast uses data from between Port Clinton and the Port Gawler Conservation Park. These data, collected by Shorebirds 2020 volunteers and Birdlife Australia staff and reported in the Birdlife Australia Explore portal have greatly added to the Northern Samphire coast data sets reported here. However, it should be noted that the number and locations of sites reported here, differ slightly from those reported elsewhere (Lees and Roetmann, 2024). This latter publication reports on additional sites from Port Julia to Mac Beach (NW GSV), but not from the central and inner Port River, Semaphore and North Haven.



Figs 12 a,b: Oystercatchers on Bird Island, Outer Harbor. July, 2023. A. Flocking Pied Oystercatchers roosting amongst beach wrack, b. Flying Sooty Oystercatchers. Photos: I. Forsyth.

Over the past 8 years, the abundance of POCs in the Southern Samphire has fluctuated markedly (Fig. 13). A large proportion of the population observed in years of high abundance, occurs in the central part of the Port River (Gillman, Penrice and Snowden's Beach).

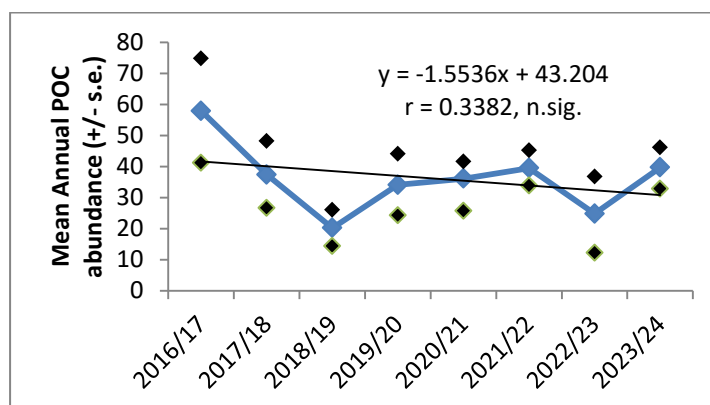


Fig. 13: Fluctuations in annual abundance (mean Numbers (+/- s.e.) and trend line for Pied Oystercatchers in the Southern Samphire region, 2016/17 – 2023/24)

During this summer of 2024/25, numbers in this area have again risen significantly in this area (Fig. 14). In this central part of the Port River, these, summer flocking birds are observed foraging on the edge of low tides in daylight hours.

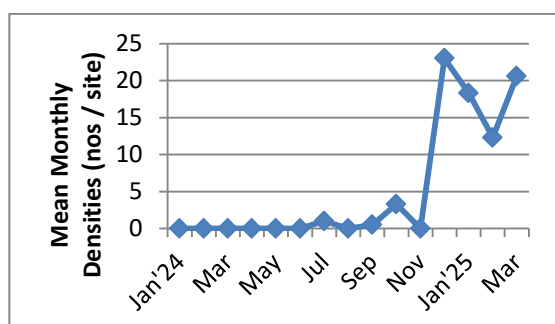


Fig. 14: Mean Density of Pied Oystercatchers in central Port River, (Southern Samphire), Jan'24 – March'25.

A pair of breeding Pied Oystercatchers and offspring continues to be observed on the western edge of Torrens Island. Breeding is also known to take place on Bird Island, immediately north of Outer Harbor. In January'25, as part of the Birdlife Australia summer count, 72 adult POCs and 3 juveniles were observed, and 22 SOC (K. Bartley, pers. com). Also, a pair showing territorial aggression against a second intruding pair has been observed immediately inside the North Haven Marina, but, with no evidence of breeding or juvenile birds.

In the Southern Samphire, SOC have been less abundant than POCs in recent years, and have been significantly declining ($r = 0.7486^{**}$, Fig. 15). This decline has continued to occur throughout all of 2024 and into the first 3 months of 2025 (Fig. 16). Early during the surveys in 2016 – 2020, birds were mainly observed in the central Port River, at similar sites to those for POCs.

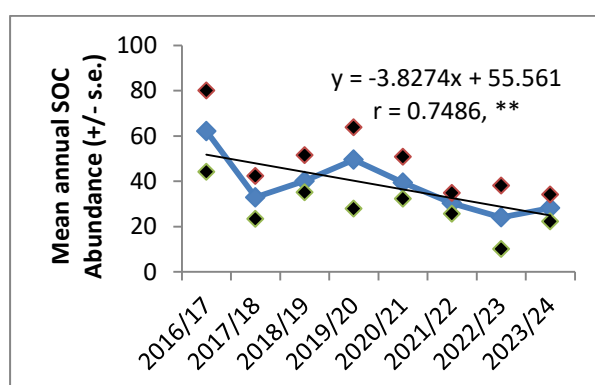


Fig. 15: Mean annual densities and trend line for SOC in the southern Samphire region, 2016/17 – 2023/24.

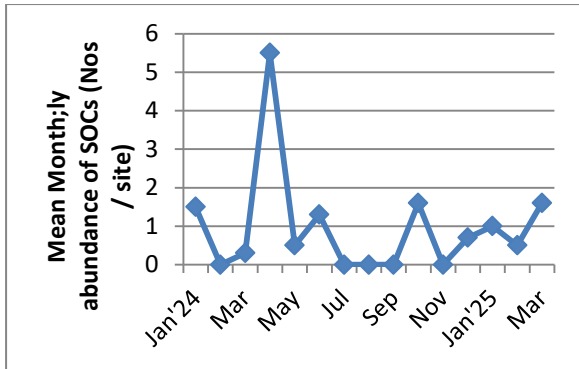


Fig. 16: Mean monthly abundance of SOC in central Port River, Jan 2024 – March, 2025.

In the Northern Samphire over this past 15 months, total counts of POCs have fluctuated markedly, with relatively low numbers observed during winter months (June – August) and high numbers in February'24 and Feb'25 (Fig. 17). SOC numbers have continued to remain relatively low, following a trend since 2019/20 (Fig. 18). As pointed out in previous Newsletters, this decline in SOC counts has been evident along all the western coast of Gulf St. Vincent (Western Fleurieu, Southern Samphire and Northern Samphire coasts).

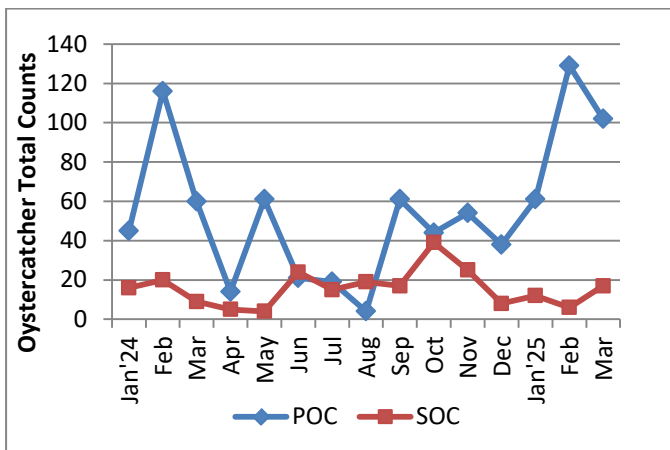


Fig. 17: Total Counts of POCs (Blue) and SOC (Maroon) in Northern Samphire, Jan'2024 – Mar'25.

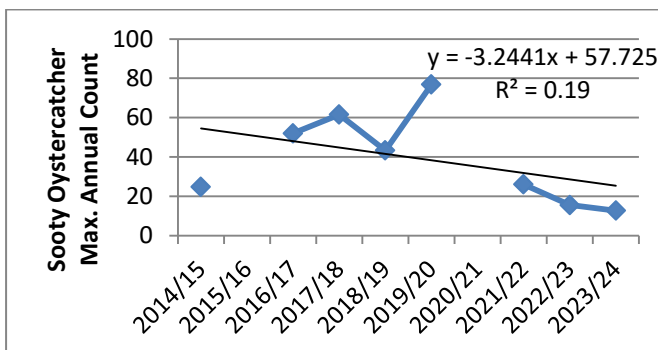


Fig. 18: Annual max. counts and trend line for SOC in the northern Samphire, 2014/15 – 2023/24. Note: no data collected for 2015/16 and 2020/21.

1.g. Kangaroo Island Report for the 2024/2025 Breeding Season by David Potter and Jean Turner

A total of 89 breeding sites were monitored this year, including Peter Hastwell's 5 sites at Min-Oil Beach, up from the 78 pairs/sites monitored last year. Mark Haby kept us informed of the Emu Bay site; Trish Mooney and Gaylene Ingram provided updates on the breeding pairs at Kingscote Yacht Club and Brownlow Avenue; and Fred and Fleur Peters gave regular updates on the breeding pair at Nepean Bay Esplanade East.

Even though the number of breeding sites increased, the number of clutches laid was reduced (76 compared with 84 last year). Thus a corresponding reduction in the number of eggs was observed (133 compared with 143), with a corresponding decrease in the number of chicks hatched (28 compared with 31). However the number of chicks fledged was slightly higher this year (26 compared with 22 last year), and the overall breeding success rate, measured as % chicks fledged per number of eggs laid was higher this season, at 19.85%, compared with 15.4% in 2023/2024.

Summary of 2024/2025 Breeding Results

Pairs monitored	89
Clutches Laid	76
Eggs Laid	133
Chicks Hatched	28
Chicks Fledged	26
% Chicks/No. of Eggs	20.61%
%Fledged/No. of Eggs	19.85%

Unfortunately one fledgling subsequently died due to vehicle strike on Hog Bay Road, Penneshaw, adjacent to Christmas Cove. Vehicle strikes have killed two adults in the same location in the past few years. Breeding results for each pair monitored are provided in the table below.

Pied Oystercatcher Breeding Pair Results, 2024/2025

2024/2025 (89 sites)	Total Eggs Laid	Total Chicks Hatched	No. of Fledglings	No. Clutches Laid
Antechamber Bay				
Antechamber Bay -South	1 (minimum)	0	0	1
Antechamber Bay -North	0	0	0	0
Christmas Cove	2	2	2	1
American Beach	2	0	0	1
Baudin Beach	1	0	0	1
Browns Beach				
Crabby Jacks	2	0	0	1
Browns Beach -Mad Mile East	2	2	2	1
Browns Beach -Mad Mile West	1	1	unknown	1
Island Beach				

Island Beach -Rocky Point	2	0	0	1
Island Beach -Willoughby	2	0	0	1
Island Beach -Cassini	1	0	0	1
Island Beach -Seal St	4	0	0	2
Island Beach -Boat Ramp	7	2	2	3
Island Beach -Flinders Grove	2	0	0	1
Island Beach -Nepean Drive East	0	0	0	0
Island Beach -Nepean Drive Mid	3	0	0	2
Island Beach -Nepean Drive West	6	0	0	3
Island Beach -Golf Course Corner	6	1	1	3
Island Beach -GC Corner W-1	4	1	1	2
Island Beach -GC Corner W-2	0	0	0	0
Island Beach -GC Corner W-3	0	0	0	0
Strawbridge Point Beach				
Strawbridge Point Beach -N	5	0	0	3
Strawbridge Point Beach -S	2	0	0	1
American River				
American River -opp Picnic Point	4	0	0	2
American Riv -Remembrance Point	2	1	1	1
Ballast Head Beach House South	0	0	0	0
Ballast Head Beach House	1 (minimum)	1	1	1
Ballast Head Cannery	1 (minimum)	1	1	1
Min-Oil Road				
Min-Oil Rd -Jantz East	1	0	0	1
Min-Oil Rd -Jantz	2	0	0	1
Min-Oil Rd -Telstra Track East*	4	0	0	2
Min-Oil Rd -Telstra Track	1	0	0	1
Min-Oil Road -Telstra Track West	0	0	0	0
Min-Oil Road -Boat Ramp	2	0	0	1
Min-Oil Road -Oyster Lease West	0	0	0	0
Min-Oil Road Oyster Lease East	0	0	0	0
Min-Oil Rd -Cliffs	2	0	0	1
Nepean Bay West (PH)	0	0	0	0
Nepean Bay Midwest (PH)	2	0	0	1
Nepean Bay Midway (PH)	2	0	0	1
Nepean Bay Mid East (PH)	0	0	0	0
Nepean Bay East (PH)	0	0	0	0
Nepean Bay (Settlement)				
Nepean Bay Esplanade East	4	1	1	2
Nepean Bay Esplanade West	1 (minimum)	1	1	1
Nepean Bay -Chernier	0	0	0	0
Nepean Bay -Sapphire	0	0	0	0
Cygnet River				
Cygnet River -Estuary Road	0	0	0	0
Cygnet River -Sapphire	0	0	0	0
Cygnet River -Estuary Mouth	1 (minimum)	Suspect chick(s)	unknown	1
Cygnet River -Links Rd	1 (minimum)	1	1	1
Browlow to Kingscote				
Browlow -NorthEast Terrace	0	0	0	0

Brownlow Avenue Kingscote	2	1	1	1
Kingscote Yacht Club	3	1	0	2
Kingscote – Bay of Shoals				
Bay of Shoals -Reeves Point West	0	0	0	0
Bay of Shoals -Mangrove	1	0	0	1
Bay of Shoals -Boat Ramp East	2	1	1	2
Bay of Shoals -Boat Ramp West	2	0	0	1
Dover Farm				
Dover Farm -Nitre Bush	0	0	0	0
Dover Farm -Fence Corner	1	1	1	1
Dover Farm -Scrub	1 (minimum)	Suspect chick(s)	0	1
Dover Farm -Red Cliff Point	1	unknown	0	1
Dover Farm -Stairs	0	0	0	0
Dover Farm -Mallee Headland	2	0	0	1
Dover Farm -Melaleuca 1	0	0	0	0
Dover Farm -Melaleuca-2	0	0	0	0
Dover Farm -Melaleuca 3	2	2	2	1
Dover Farm -1st House	0	0	0	0
North Cape Road				
267 North Cape Road	2	2	2	1
313 North Cape Rd	2	Suspect chick(s)	0	1
North Cape Rd -Cassinia BoatRamp	3	1	1	1
419 North Cape Road	4	0	0	2
Last Boat Ramp-North Cape Road	2	0	0	1
Cape Rouge Beach				
Cape Rouge -Paddock	2	1	1	1
Cape Rouge -Melaleuca	0	0	0	0
Cape Rouge -Fence West	2	1	1	1
Cape Rouge -Fence East	0	0	0	0
Cape Rouge-Windmill	2	0	0	1
Cape Rouge -Point	0	0	0	0
Cape Rouge -Point West	0	0	0	0
Emu Bay	2	0	0	1
D'Estrees Bay				
D'Estrees Bay -North of Shacks	2	1	1	1
D'Estrees Bay -Wrights Cottage	3	0	0	1
D'Estrees Bay -Wreckers Beach	1	0	0	1
D'Estrees Bay -Wheatons Beach	0	0	0	0
Bales Beach				
Bales Bay -Beach 1 West	0	0	0	0
Bales Bay -Beach 1 East	0	0	0	0
Bales Bay -Beach2	0	0	0	0
Vivonne Bay	0	0	0	0
Hanson Bay	3	1	1	2
Total	133	28	26	75

Notes:

The Min-Oil Rd Nepean Bay sites designated (PH) above are all monitored by Peter Hastwell. The site listed as Min-Oil Rd -Telstra Track East* above (and in previous reports) has since been named "Min-Oil Jants West_PO" in BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds Portal.

Pied Oystercatcher Breeding Effort for each area, 2024/2025

Area	Total Eggs Laid/Area	No. of Chicks/area	No. of Fledglings/ Area	No. of Clutches	No. of Breeding Pairs
Antechamber Bay	1 (minimum)	0	0	1	2
Christmas Cove	2	2	2	1	1
American Beach	2	0	0	1	1
Baudin Beach	1	0	0	1	1
Brown Beach	5	3	2	3	3
Island Beach	37	4	4	19	13
Strawbridge Point Beach	7	0	0	4	2
American River	8	3	3	5	5
Min Oil Rd (Public Sites)	12	0	0	7	9
Min Oil Rd (Peter Hastwell's Sites)	4	0	0	2	5
Nepean Bay (Settlement)	5	2	2	3	4
Cygnat River	2	1	1	2	4
Brownlow to Kingscote	5	2	1	3	3
Kingscote - Bay of Shoals	5	1	1	4	4
Dover Farm	7	3	3	5	10
North Cape Road	13	3	3	6	5
Cape Rouge Beach	6	2	2	3	7
Emu Bay	2	0	0	1	1
D'Estrees Bay	6	1	1	3	4
Bales Beach	0	0	0	0	3
Vivonne Bay	0	0	0	0	1
Hanson Bay	3	1	1	2	1
Total	133	28	26	75	89
%Chicks Hatched/No of Eggs		21.05%			
%Fledglings/No of eggs			19.54%		

Note: “Suspect chick(s)” in the Breeding Pairs table are not included in the analysis of breeding success.

Causes of Breeding Failure

- Storm surges, extreme high tides and goanna predation continue to be the major known causes of nest failure. See summary table below.
- Goanna tracks around nests can easily be erased after an hour or two of high wind, so nest failures attributed to them may well be an underestimate. Goannas regularly patrol some beaches in early spring (see Fig. 19).
- A nest site on a rock stack which is quite small in area but used successfully in the last couple of years, has also become a roosting site for cormorants. It is believed the cormorants have either trampled the eggs or caused roll-out of the eggs this season.
- Another elevated nest site had a definite roll-out with no further interest in the egg by the incubating birds. No sign of the cause of the roll-out was observed.
- One recently-fledged juvenile died due to a vehicle strike.
- Two pairs failed to hatch their eggs (presumed infertile). One pair has never hatched chicks from their clutches, which suggests at least 1 of the pair is infertile. This may be due to the age of the female. The other pair is a Pied Oystercatcher and Sooty Oystercatcher “Odd Couple” that have bonded and held a territory for 3 seasons.
- A third pair, thought to be first-time breeders and new to the site, abandoned their nest after a territorial dispute observed during monitoring. Following the dispute, one of the partners disappeared, leaving the other bird holding the territory on its own.
- A large number of pairs (25) didn’t have any breeding attempts, due to destruction of suitable nest habitat by storm surges, or maybe inadequate nutrition caused by the extreme high tides preventing adequate feeding opportunities in the lead up to breeding.
- Generally, once chicks had hatched, the parents were good at protecting and feeding them, so the majority survived and fledged.

Summary - Causes of Egg Loss

Goanna	7
Washed away	18
Dune collapse	1
Roll-out	1
Trampling (by cormorants)	1
Infertile eggs	2
Vehicle strike	1
Nest abandoned (territorial dispute)	1
Unknown	21
No attempt	25



Unfortunately the high number of breeding sites monitored over the breeding season meant that the time between surveys extended out to fortnightly, rather than the ideal of weekly. Thus any traces of predation by birds, reptiles or mammals would have been erased by wind-blown sand.

Month First Clutch observed

The month of first clutch laid is summarised below. Intensive monitoring began ~~as usual~~ in July to pick up the first attempts. As usual, most first clutches were laid in September and October.

Season	August	September	October	November	December
2024/2025	8	17	20	2	1

Pied Oystercatcher Nest Site Substrates

Pied Oystercatchers on Kangaroo Island continue to choose a wide range of nesting sites. Some pairs remained faithful to their “traditional” nesting habitats, while other pairs were able to adapt to different habitats after initial failure.

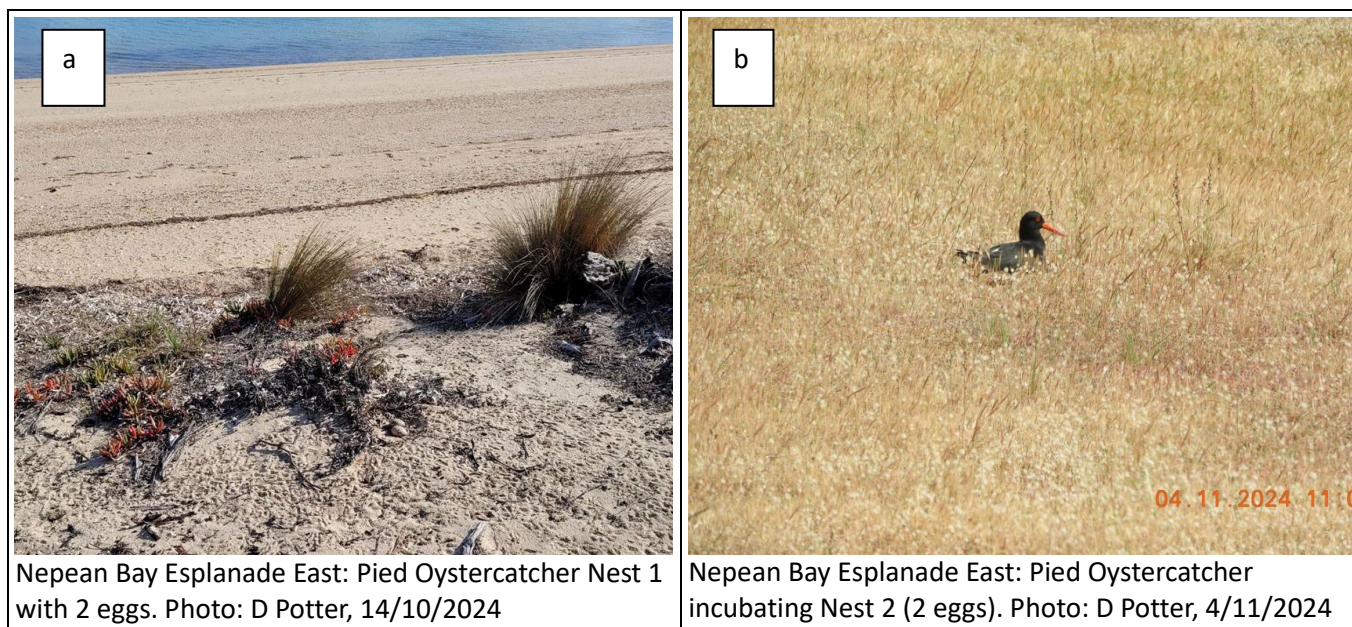
Four pairs of Pied Oystercatchers had chicks at sites where their nests had not been undetected. Another two pairs were strongly suspected to have chicks (based on behaviour) at sites where nests were not found.

Pied Oystercatcher Nest Habitats Used, 2024/2025

Dune	5
Foredune	10
Beach	35
Rocks	7
Chernier	3
Samphire	3
Wrack	5
Paddock	2
Island	1
Unknown	6

Diversity of Nest Sites

While most nests are on beach sand, the images below show some of the range of sites used by Kangaroo Island Pied Oystercatchers (Figs 20, 21 & 22).

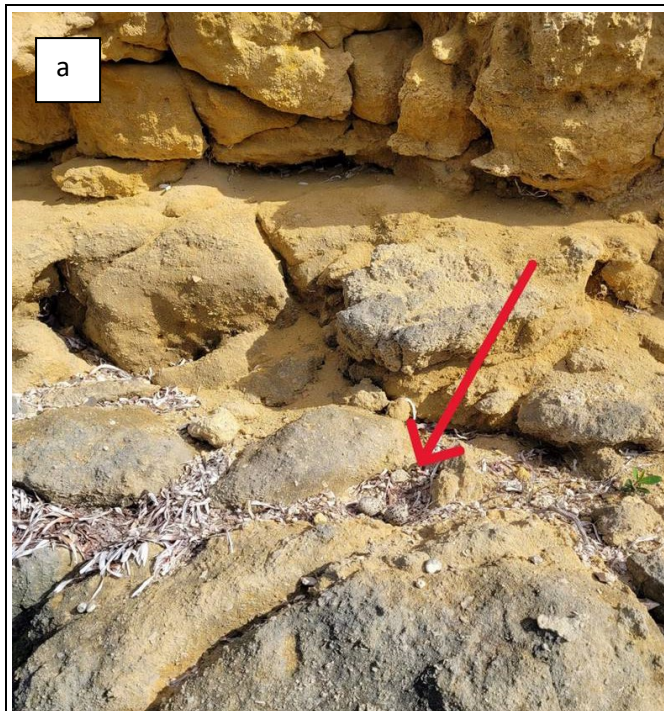


Figs. 20 a & b: Ranges in nesting habitats by Pied Oystercatchers.

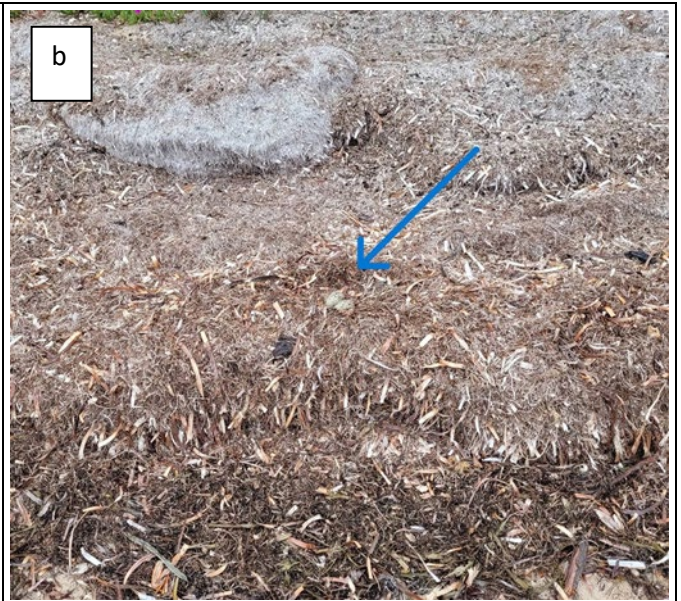
Initially the Nepean Esplanade East pair nested on the low fore-dune ledge just above the beach. Unfortunately this lovely nest with 2 eggs failed. After some stormy weather and high spring tides the pair made their second nest more than 50m inland from the beach, in a grassy paddock adjacent to the main entrance to the settlement.

The nest was very exposed, close to two roads used frequently by locals and visitors. The bird in the photograph is incubating the eggs, which were close to hatching. The pair successfully hatched 1 chick, and raised it to fledging, thanks to the prompt actions and support of local residents – with a little help from signage to raise awareness of the nest.

At American Beach, the Pied Oystercatchers nested on rocks and soil built up on the upper beach from the eroding cliff face. This pair usually nests on a thick, dry ledge of seagrass wrack which persists for months on the upper beach. However, this season the wrack was swept away in winter by high tides and storm surges, leaving only the eroded soil and rocks above the high tide zone. Unfortunately this nest with 2 eggs failed and the pair did not have another breeding attempt (Fig. 20 a).



Nest with 2 eggs, American Beach.
Photo: D Potter, 17/09/2024

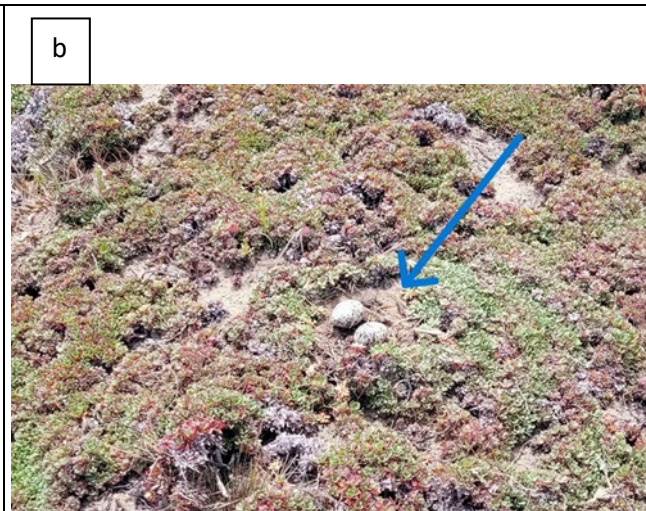


A typical nest with 2 eggs on seagrass wrack, Island Beach West-3. The nest scrape and eggs are well camouflaged.
Photo: D Potter, 13/10/2024

Figs. 21 a & b: Range of nesting sites for Pied Oystercatchers.



Location of nest in Samphire shrubland, Strawbridge Point.
Photo: D Potter, 4/11/2024



Close up of nest with 2 eggs in Samphire shrubland, Strawbridge Point.
Photo: D Potter, 4/11/2024

Figs. 22 a & b: Range of nesting habitats for Pied Oystercatchers on KI.

The Strawbridge Point Beach North pair usually nests on the upper beach or fore-dune ledge. Their first nest on the beach was washed away by a high tide, so they chose to try in the adjoining Samphire shrub-land.

The left photo shows the very cautious incubating bird, disturbed off the nest by the observer more than 50m away. The 2 eggs were in a shallow scrape among Sea Lavender tussocks (*Limonium companyonis*) between the samphire shrubs. Unfortunately this second attempt in the Samphire shrub-land also failed.

2. BANDING NEWS.

2.a. South-East SA. An adult Sooty Oystercatcher with flag T3, was sighted at Nora Creina on 22 Feb, 2025 by Barry Simes (Fig. 23). It was with a fellow adult and accompanying juvenile (see Fig. 1). T3 was caught and flagged in 2019 by FoSSE (Friends of Shorebirds SE), 6 years previously in the same area (M. Christie, pers.com.).



Fig. 23: Adult Sooty Oystercatcher, flagged T3, at Nora Creina, SE SA, February, 2025. Photo: B. Simes

2.b. Fleurieu and Coorong Ocean Beach. Table 2 updates the movements of several flagged Pied Oystercatchers observed on the Goolwa Beach and Coorong Ocean Beach up to October, 2024. The original table is seen in Team Oystercatcher Newsletter, September, 2024, No. 11. In the past 6 months, two birds, Flags Black 07 and Black 08 were observed on Goolwa Beach, adjacent to the Main Car Park in October, 2024 by Emma Vanderzon. Over the previous year, Black 07 has been sighted on the Coorong Ocean Beach and Goolwa Beach (various sites), having originally been caught and flagged at Danger Point, SE SA as a chick in 2020.

The second bird, Flag Black 08 has made a more rapid movement from Piccininnie Ponds Beach as a chick in Jan, 2024 to the Goolwa Town Beach in October, 2024.

Table 2: Movements and duration of flagged POCs at SE SA, Coorong Ocean Beach and SE Fleurieu between 2020 and 2024.

Location & Date of 1 st capture and flagging	Location & Date of re-sighting – South East SA	Location & Date of re-sighting on Coorong Ocean Beach	Location & Date of re-sighting on SE Fleurieu coast
POC, Flag 41 (Chick), Nene Valley, SE SA, Jan'2022			
	Blackfellows Caves, SE SA, March'2022		
			Barrage Beach, Goolwa OB, Sep' 2023
		Ti-Tree Crossing, COB Jan' 2024	
			Sugars Beach, Murray Estuary, 5 Aug'24
			Beacon 19 Beach, Goolwa OB, 17 Aug' 24
POC, Flag 07 (Chick), Danger Point, SE SA, Nov'2020			
	Nora Creina, SE SA, May'2023		
			Beacon 19 Beach, Goolwa OB, Sep'23
		Coorong OB, Jan'24	
			Barrage Beach, Goolwa OB, June'24
			Barrage Beach, Goolwa OB, July'24
			Goolwa Town Beach, October' 24
POC Flag 06 (chick), Geltwood Beach, SE SA, Jan'24			
			Barrage Beach, Goolwa OB, July'24
			Sugars Beach, Murray Estuary, Aug 5, 2024.
POC Flag 08 (chick), Piccininnie Ponds Beach, SE SA Jan'24			Goolwa Town Beach, October'24

2.c. Banding of KI Pied Oystercatchers, by David Potter and Jean Turner

Following the first banding trip in December 2023, a team of five volunteer A-Class and C-Class banders from the Victorian Wader Study Group (VWSG) / Friends of Shorebirds South East (SA) returned to Kangaroo Island in early December 2024 to band more Pied Oystercatchers. They were joined by a PhD candidate from Flinders University and a

Research Assistant from the University of Adelaide, both working on projects related to Pied Oystercatcher ecology in SA. Five local Birdlife KI members and four DEW Park Rangers came out to watch the process.

This time the weather was more favourable and the team successfully captured and banded 9 chicks and 7 adults. With the 5 chicks banded in December 2023, 21 Pied Oystercatchers have now been flagged on KI. Sadly, one healthy, fledged chick has since died from an unrelated vehicle strike. In a first for the VWSG, one complete family of 2 adults and 2 chicks were banded at Island Beach.



With national concern about potential arrival of the H5N1 Avian Influenza to Australia, the banders were required to follow strict hygiene procedures additional to their usual Banding Permit requirements.

Sterile face-masks, surgical gloves and plastic aprons were worn at all times when handling birds, and kept for safe disposal as a potential bio-hazard.

Banding tools were sterilised between each bird and fresh gloves were used for each bird. Bird ‘comfort towels’, handling bags and banders clothing were washed daily.

Photo: D Potter, 11/12/2024

Fig. 24. Banding and flagging a Pied Oystercatcher Chick, December, 2024.

Both banding trips were enabled by a grant from the South Australian Shorebird Foundation. The table below gives the leg flag details and location where each bird was banded in December 2023 and December 2024.

Leg Flag Colour, Engraving and Position	Banding Location	Banding Region
Dec 2023 Banding Trip		
Black 31 upper right	Island Beach, Boat Ramp site	Eastern Cove
Black 33 upper right	Bay of Shoals west of Boat Ramp	Bay of Shoals
Black 34 upper right	Bay of Shoals west of Boat Ramp	Bay of Shoals
Black 35 upper right	Telstra site, Minoil Rd	Western Cove
Black 36 upper right	267 site, Nth Cape Rd	Bay of Shoals

Dec 2024 Banding trip		
Black KA upper right	Christmas Cove, KI	Backstairs Passage
Black KB upper right	Christmas Cove, KI	Backstairs Passage
Black KC upper right	Brownlow Tce, Kingscote, KI	Western Cove
Black KD upper right	Island Beach, Boat ramp site, KI	Eastern Cove
Black KE upper right	Island Beach, Boat ramp site, KI	Eastern Cove
Black KJ upper right	Brown Beach, east, KI	Eastern Cove
Black KK upper right	Brown Beach, east, KI	Eastern Cove
Black KL upper right	Island Beach west, KI	Eastern Cove
Black KM upper right	Hanson Bay, SW River Estuary, KI	Hanson Bay
Black KR upper right	Hanson Bay, SW River Estuary, KI	Hanson Bay
Black KS upper right	Brownlow Tce, Kingscote, KI	Western Cove
Black KP upper right	Dover Site, Bay of Shoals, KI	Bay of Shoals
Black KN upper right	Island Beach, golf gourse, KI	Eastern Cove
Black KT upper right	Island Beach, golf course, KI	Eastern Cove
Black KU upper right	Island Beach, Boat ramp site, KI	Eastern Cove
Black KX upper right	Island Beach, Boat ramp site, KI	Eastern Cove

Re-sightings of Flagged KI Pied Oystercatchers

The 5 chicks banded in December 2023 were all re-sighted in 2024 as fledged juveniles in their natal territories, before dispersing. All have been re-sighted in one of the main non-breeding flocking groups at either Reeves Point, Cape Rouge or Island Beach West.

Adults and chicks banded in December 2024 have generally been re-sighted within the breeding/natal territories where they were banded, but some juveniles have dispersed to other sites. The longest movement recorded this season was of the juvenile Black KB, banded as a chick at Christmas Cove Penneshaw and re-sighted at Kingscote Yacht Club beach on 21st January 2025 – nearly 30km directly over water, but possibly done as a longer trip, via beaches and with stop-offs. Three birds have not been confirmed re-sighted.

Special thanks to Bill Jenner (BJ), Caroline Paterson (CP), Gaylene Ingram (GI), Ian Ingram (II), Kathryn Lewis (KL), Sam Correll (SC) and Wren Lashmar (WL) for re-sightings of flagged Pied Oystercatchers. David Potter (DGP) and Jean Turner (JAT) also recorded re-sightings during regular monitoring.

Re-sightings and recorded movements are summarised below.

Black 31: Banded at Island Beach, December 23. Re-sighted 6 times, mainly in the high tide flocking group at Island Beach West, but once feeding with 2 adults at American River in August 2024. (DGP)

Black 33: Banded at Kingscote (Bay of Shoals Boat ramp beach), December 2023. Re-sighted 3 times, twice feeding with 2 adults (parents) at the boat ramp beach, then with the high tide flocking group at Cape Rouge Point in July 2024. (DGP and WL)

Black 34: Banded at Kingscote (Bay of Shoals Boat ramp beach), December 2023. Sibling of Black 33. Re-sighted 4 times, twice feeding with its parents at the boat ramp beach, then in

May and June 2024, roosting with the high tide flocking group at Reeves Point. (DGP, KL and WJ)

Black 35: Banded at Min Oil Beach, December 2023. Re-sighted 1 month later with its parents at Min Oil beach, then in April 2024 with the high tide flocking group at Reeves Point. (DGP and SC)

Black 36: Banded at north shore of Bay of Shoals, opposite 267 North Cape Road. Re-sighted 4 times, initially foraging with its parents near 267 North Cape Rd, then in November 2024 with the high tide flocking group at Reeves Point. (DGP, JAT and WJ)

Black KA: Banded as a chick at Christmas Cove Penneshaw, sibling of Black KB. Re-sighted 3 times as a fledged juvenile, twice foraging with parents and sibling in Christmas Cove; then as a dead bird on Hog Bay Road Penneshaw. Body with metal leg band recovered, black leg flag missing. (Re-sightings by JAT)

Black KB: Banded as a chick at Christmas Cove Penneshaw, sibling of Black KA. Re-sighted 3 times in Christmas Cove as a fledged juvenile, before being re-sighted at Kingscote Yacht Club beach in January 2025. (JAT and TM)

Black KC: Banded as a recently-fledged juvenile at Brownlow Tce beach, Kingscote. Territorial disputes at the site between adult pairs; possibly re-sighted at Yacht Club beach. (No photo to confirm, GI and II)

Black KD: Banded as a chick at Island Beach boat ramp. Sibling of Black KE and off-spring of Black KU and Black KX. Re-sighted at least 4 times as a fledged juvenile in this territory. (DGP & JAT)

Black KE: Banded as a chick at Island Beach boat ramp. Sibling of Black KD and off-spring of Black KU and Black KX. Re-sighted at least 4 times as a fledged juvenile in this territory. (DGP & JAT)

Black KJ: Banded as a chick at Brown's Beach (Mad Mile Track East), sibling of KK. Re-sighted at least 4 times, including further west, near Rocky Point, in the Mad Mile track West territory.

Black KK: Banded as a chick at Brown's Beach (Mad Mile Track East), sibling of KJ. Re-sighted at least 4 times along Brown's Beach, including further west, near Rocky Point, in the Mad Mile track West territory. Also re-sighted in February 2025 with the non-breeding flocking group at Island Beach West, then back at Brown's Beach, with its parents and sibling KJ the following week. (JAT and DGP).

Black KL: Adult banded in its territory at Island Beach West. Partner not captured, chick too young to band. Thought to still be in the area, but no confirmed re-sightings of leg flag.

Black KM: Banded as a chick in the estuary of South West River, Hanson Bay. Off-spring of Black KR. Re-sighted twice in the estuary in January 2025 (CP, DGP and JAT).

Black KN: Breeding adult, banded in its breeding territory at Island Beach West. Partner of Black KT. Their chick was too young to band. Re-sighted 3 times with its partner and chick (now fledged). (DGP).

Black KP: Banded as a chick in the Dover farm area of Bay of Shoals. Re-sighted with its parents 3 times in the same area, confirmed fledged. (DGP).

Black KR: Adult banded in its breeding territory in the South West River estuary, Hanson Bay. Parent of Black KM. Re-sighted twice in January 2025, foraging with KM in the estuary (CP, DGP and JAT).

Black KS: Adult banded at Brownlow Avenue beach, Kingscote. Breeding territory disputes occurred, so we are unsure if this is a parent of Black KC. A flagged adult was sighted nearby in late January 2025, too far away to read the engraving (GI and II). Otherwise not re-sighted.

Black KT: Breeding adult, banded in its breeding territory at Island Beach West. Partner of Black KN. Chick too young to band. Re-sighted 4 times, 3 times with partner and chick (now fledged). (DGP)

Black KU: Adult banded in its breeding territory, Island Beach boat ramp. Partner of Black KX and parent of Black KD and Black KE. Re-sighted regularly, with partner and chicks/fledged juveniles (confirmed at least 3 times). (DGP and JAT).

Black KX: Adult banded in its breeding territory, Island Beach boat ramp. Partner of Black KU and parent of Black KD and Black KE. Re-sighted regularly with partner and chicks/fledged juveniles, confirmed at least twice (DGP and JAT).

Any reports of flagged Oystercatchers on KI would be appreciated, whether the local Pieds listed above, or other Pieds or Sooties visiting from the mainland. Details required are date, time, location where seen and contact details if follow-up required. A photo showing the engraved leg flag is also appreciated, to confirm the sighting. Optional extras include a grid reference, a brief note of habitat, what the bird was doing (e.g. roosting, foraging), and approximate count of any other Oystercatchers present.

Re-sightings can either be emailed to David Potter and Jean Turner, at kioystercatchers@gmail.com

OR entered directly into the **BirdMark** Portal - <https://www.birdmark.net/>

BirdMark is a national database for observations of resident and migratory shorebirds, set up by the Victorian Wader Study Group, the Australasian Wader Studies Group and Deakin University. It is maintained by volunteers. The database uses specific coding for reporting the leg flags, explained in the flag reporting description, with a photo example to help select the correct notation. Re-sightings emailed to Potter and Turner will be entered in BirdMark with the sighter's name.

Pied Oystercatchers banded by the VWSG/Friends of Shorebirds SE have a uniquely numbered metal band above the 'knee' on the left leg, and an engraved coloured flag above the 'knee' on the right leg (RA). All leg flags used on KI are black (colour denoted N for 'nigra' to distinguish it from B for blue), and engraved in white (W), either with numbers or letters. This allows them to be readily identified in the field through binoculars or photos, and when entering re-sightings in BirdMark. Hence, leg flag Black31 would be coded as RANFW(31).

3. SA SHOREBIRDS FOUNDATION NEWS.

Grant 2021-02. L. Butterfield. PhD candidate, Flinders University "A Social Marketing Intervention to increase compliance with Beach regulations." (3 year project). This is the third year of the project with data analysis and report writing currently underway.

Grant 2022-02. R. Mead, Birdlife Australia. "Kangaroo Island, banding together to conserve Hooded Plover" (2 year project) The Birdlife Australia team and additional KI volunteers undertook their second trip to KI in October, 2024 to catch and band Hooded Plovers at various sites on both the NE and south coasts of the island. The results are currently being collated.

Grant 2024-01. E. Vanderzon. PhD candidate, Flinders University. "Ecology of Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers in South Australia." (3 yr project) This project commenced in September, 2024, with study sites established on sthn Yorke Peninsula, the Samphire coast (NE Gulf St. Vincent), Kangaroo Island and the SE Fleurieu coasts. The project includes measuring the disturbance distances, their diets and comparison with adjacent living biota (using DNA analysis) and exploring their movement ecologies by catching and banding birds. The project has received great interest and support from a number of groups, including Friends of Australian International Bird Sanctuary (FAIBS), KI Shorebird volunteers and Friends of Shorebirds SE (FoSSE).

Grant 2024-02. Friends of Shorebirds SE (FoSSE) and Victorian Wader Studies Group (VWSG). "Banding Australian Pied Oystercatchers on Kangaroo Island." (2 year project) Detailed reports on the progress of this project are available in Team Oystercatcher Newsletters Nos. 11 (Sept, 2024) and 12 (this newsletter).

Grant 2024-03. D. Prowse and R. Cope, Adelaide University. "Quantifying the impact of disturbances on the movement and behaviour of Pied Oystercatchers." (2 year project) This project commenced in September, 2024, with movement cameras deployed adjacent to Pied Oystercatcher nests, 10 km apart along the Coorong Ocean Beach between Tea-tree Crossing and the Murray Mouth. Cameras were retrieved in February, 2025 and data are currently being analysed. In the coming POC breeding season (2025/26), a number of adult Pied Oystercatchers will be caught, flagged and attached with GPS trackers using shoulder harnesses.

4. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

The support and interest by many shorebird enthusiasts in all the regions where monitoring and research on Oystercatchers is undertaken, are gratefully appreciated. The names of people taking photos are acknowledged throughout the report. Also, special support from the SA Beach Nesting Shorebird staff of Birdlife Australia (Kerri Barley and Julia Roetmann), who organised the Coorong Summer and Biennial surveys and the Big Duck Boat Surveys is gratefully acknowledged. I also thank Jeff Campbell, Maureen Christie, David Potter and Jean Turner for our valuable discussions about Oystercatchers in South Australia. Finally, the R & D Committee of the SA Shorebirds Foundation are acknowledged for their independent reviews of all Foundation grant applications, as well as advice on potential projects. Final reports to each project are available on the SA Shorebirds Foundation website (www.sashorebirds.org).

5. REFERENCES

Campbell, J. (2025) November 2024 Hooded Plover Count Lower South East South Australia. FoSSE Report, p. 7. Table 2: November 2024 Count, Other Beach Nesting Species (where counted).

Lees, D., Roetmann, J. (2024) Shorebird Population Monitoring within Gulf St. Vincent. 2023/24. Annual Report. Report prepared from Green Adelaide Board by Birdlife Australia. 46 pp.



Fig. 25. Pied Oystercatcher adult and 2 chicks on Coorong Ocean Beach during the 2024 Biennial Beach-nesting Shorebird Survey, November, 2024. (Photo: K. Bartley)